Sometimes you need a journey to anywhere

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Sometimes you need a journey to anywhere

by Vagabond_Anon

Summary

On a midnight train two paths destined to cross, crossed early to restore their fated destiny.

A meeting by chance

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In the sickly light of fluorescent bulbs she managed to ease herself down into a quiet seat in the back of the car before the train started moving. Conductor satisfied with her ticket and cheap excuse of a stomach ache left her alone to clutch her stomach with both hands. The multitude of pains within her from all over were throbbing in tune with her heartbeat. One in her core of particular note from where a steel fire poker heated by flame was cruelly pressed up into her to strike her walls at random. Another coming with a muffled cough that exacerbated what were assuredly broken ribs and bruised lungs.

Arm used to muffle the noise revealed a sleeve speckled with blood when pulled away. Quickly she reached into a pocket on her long coat for a tissue to wipe it away before it stained the immaculately white surface. She was already in enough trouble as it was.

It had been a mistake of the highest order. Years of carefully plotting against and appeasing the vile woman that gave birth to her, claimed to lovingly raise her to the printed media, was almost wrecked with a single misspoken word before construction on the academy was even finished.

She accidentally called her mother by her first name.

To her face.

In public no less.

It had been late in a long day, she had already been exhausted, and they were out at some social function or another who's details were now lost in a fog of extended sleep deprivation now verging on twenty seven hours. She probably hadn't even been heard by anyone else on their way to the limo.

When the train stopped at a station the lurch back to motion caused her to double over and press her forehead into the back of the next seat for a minute. The pain would die down eventually. The midnight trains were always a quiet corner away from the bustle of her life where she could sit and let aches dull. She just needed time.

Nevertheless it had been inexcusable. A lapse in her solid stone facade that brought down a fury she had never once in her life of perpetual torment thought possible. The woman actually hit her. Not slapped, not sexually abused in any way feasible, or even lorded over her inconsequential worth for being just a human. Like normal. No, the second they were behind the doors of the manor a superhuman powered fist buried itself just below her ribs with a crack of the air and sent her skipping across the floor through an ornate table in the hallway. Its pile of gilded contents battered her skull from above in a rain that made up the lightest portion of her punishment for the rogue impolite utterance. From there her hair was grabbed and used to haul her into the air where a knee crashed into her ribs with enough momentum to send her deeper into the house. This pattern of blows continued each and every time she attempted to get to her feet all the way to Ragyo's study where the real punishments began.

During which for the first time in the sixteen years of her life she thought she was going to die.

But her body while burned, broken, and viciously battered inside and out until her skin was more a rainbow of bruises than flesh tones was still marginally functioning. For how long was anyone's guess. She would overcome it as usual. The whole ordeal had been informative at least. Ragyo wasn't just a devoted figurehead representing the enemy, she was an outright living manifestation of them. Infested by them.

The plan to kill her with a simple stab in the back probably wasn't going to work.

The plan had already been adjusted accordingly of course.

The train stopped again. This time the car started to fill with other people. Likely the graveyard shift commuter crowd going to work or home. Forcing her body to work beyond the pains in her spine she eased up in her seat enough to glance out the window to her left. Signs studied and applied to what she knew of the national rail service's map her theory crumbled with a frown. She was on a train bound far north out of the city and not on the Tokyo circuit line like usual.

It was going to make returning arduous in her current condition, but some small part of her was relieved that she was physically moving away from the female shaped monstrosity responsible for that current condition if even for a temporary reprieve. She just needed time to stabilize and start healing, then she would head back to work.

Over the next few stops she managed to sit up in her seat to meditate. Ignoring the small trickle of blood she could feel pooling in her pants and lungs. Until a commotion disrupted her thoughts. Cracking open her eyes she turned to face the noise's direction after the train stopped once again. Rough voice yelling out after something slammed into the train's side.

“Oi now you're running!? I was just getting started on your asses! You fucks are lucky this is my ride or I'd run you down and kill you!”

She could hear a number of people running away and knocking over anything in their rapid flight into the distance with clatters. Still staring toward the car's door a few rows ahead she heard the same female voice rudely answer the conductor demanding her ticket and insulted him for not helping after he walked off. Followed by a sound of something being dragged across the floor toward her.

As the train lurched back into motion the form responsible for the yelling and noise came into view and quiet literally fell into the open seat next to her a disheveled quarter naked mess. It was a girl. And it looked like she just survived a serious mugging.

Hissing in pain as she righted herself forward in the seat there was blood visible on her face and hands. Her black hair was a matted mess save a lone bright red bang swooped to the left. Her nose black, blue, and likely broken was leaking blood onto her lips. Neck bore concentric circular bruises from where a hand crushed against it tried to hold her down, and evidently failed. Left shoulder was bare, her hands moved to find her bra strap snapped with a blush. Persevering she slipped button up shirt back up to match her right side with a pained grunt. Swore when she found most the buttons from collar down to under bust missing.

“Fucking assholes.”

While the black and white jacket slipped down on her arms went ignored she lifted herself slightly to fix blue and white stripped panties that matched her bra, until the last string holding it together at a point cut by a knife gave. Frustrated rush of air from her nose she attempted to tug short skirt back up to her waist instead that ended in a low string of swears when she found the zipper had been ripped off completely as well.

Spying the girl out of the corner of her eye a small cold realization sunk into her stomach. It hadn't been a mugging, she just fought off an attempted gang rape.

Ragyo wasn't the only monster among the pigs.

The girl shook her first in anger and punched the armrest. Then sighed in a resigned deflation of her mood. Reaching over to her

right she pulled a rectangular silver guitar case out of the aisle along the floor and into their row. And hit a white and blue high heel Which sent a pang of pain shooting up the attached leg.

Annoyance at the careless motion ebbed away when the girl turned left and looked at her to politely apologize.

“I'm sorry, didn't realize you were there. My bad.”

Not waiting for any kind of admonishment or answer she pulled the case away back in front of herself and leaned forward to it. Clasps undone quickly she opened it to rummage through the eclectic multitude of items within. Everything from shirts to little bottles of shampoo, but no guitar. It was an armored container just for her luggage. Or was it to protect everything she owned?

Focusing her efforts on getting words out she had an unbearable spontaneous need to talk to this battered waif. A kindred soul in the worst way. Managing to draw in enough air to her lungs to speak.

“Not a problem... You look preoccupied with recent... conflict.”

“Nah, this ain't shit I haven't dealt with before. It's just really fucking annoying. No reason to be zoned out.”

Coming to a sudden stop broken ribs were punished by a jolt that sent her into a coughing fit that drew the girl's full attention. Sleeve once again used to muffle the noise was covered in far more than just a mist of blood this time when lowered. Her condition was getting worse.

“Hey. You're not sounding that okay yourself- Hot damn what the fuck hit you a truck!?”

Pained arm splattered with blood grabbed it was pulled up into the light. Girl's own heavily bruised knuckles visible as she examined the mildly discolored ones in comparison where Ragyo stepped on them. Steeling herself she pulled the arm back. Vocal chords attempting to bark an order to release her failed though when the motion sent a wave of pain ricocheting through her rib-cage causing another blood spitting series of coughs to come out. Caught to her surprise by a clean wad of tissue shoved in front of her mouth.

“Oi, take it easy before you make whatever this is worse. Yer gonna die in like three hours tops at this rate. Police are just a fat load of nothing in the way of help yet again I'm guessing? Fuck the damn useless pigs... Hold on.”

Reaching back down into the case she pulled out a couple safety pins and used them to shoddily hold her clothes together. Content

with the temporary repair she pulled out a bottle of rubbing alcohol and more tissues. Working quickly she cleaned up her own face and hands, set her nose straight with nothing more than a grunt after it cracked into place, and then carefully cleaned the blood off the white sleeve to her left.

“Got a nice coat, girl's gotta have something nice to care about. Can't let the stain set and ruin it right?”

By the next station the case was locked, jacket pulled up onto shoulders properly, and she looked toward a light up board above the door announcing what stop they were at. Standing up with purpose she strapped the case to her back and reached over.

With surprisingly strong yet gentle motions the shorter girl carefully pulled her up out of her seat and supported her with a shoulder to move them off the train. Leaving the station behind they were periodically lit up by orange street lights as they moved into the night. Her frustratingly weak physical protests either unnoticed or outright ignored as she was practically dragged four blocks away from the station.

She was such a mess she couldn't even escape the battered girl's grasp.

Along the way her coughs started to get worse. Forcing them to stop more than once for her to splatter dark liquid onto the pavement beneath them from her mouth. The sound of their breathing being the only other noise in the stillness of whatever neighborhood she was being taken through.

Coming to a stop at an intersection her kidnapper was looking around for something when she finally got her voice to work again.

“Let me go... This instant. I'm-”

“Gonna die here like a bitch if I let you go and leave.”

“I'm... not so fragile.”

“Look I know how this works with pride and shit. Been there done that. Don't put up some front and pretend you're invincible! Cause you're not. Know when the fuck you need to cut and run to save your ass... I can tell your ribs are broken from your weight shifting, your lungs are filling with blood from trauma, and it's just a guess but you've got other serious issues elsewhere considering you haven't even tried to take a step since getting off the damn train. Oi... Oi! Don't go to sleep or you won't wake up!”

The yell in her ear made eyes open in annoyance. She didn't remember closing them, and the creeping darkness in the edges of her vision weren't helping. Fingers and toes were going cold. Her

breathing becoming more difficult. This was bad.

She was actually dying.

“Hang on I think it's this way. Just keep breathing.”

And she couldn't will her muscles into doing anything about it while this complete stranger half broken herself was dragging her around like a limp sack.

Minutes passed where she was aware of moving through space but otherwise not able to tell in what direction or for how long precisely. Her next jolt into consciousness was when she was completely picked up in the girl's arms and rushed up a set of stairs while her voice rung out for a doctor.

She remembers a woman with a heavy Russian accent responded to the desperate call.

“Who- What happened!?”

“I don't know, think a car hit her or something, found her on the train. Look she's really fucked up and hacking up enough blood to fill a bathtub. Please do something!”

“Someone get a rolling bed! Now what about you, look like you're also in need of-”

“Forget me I just need to change, she's-...”

Looking up in a daze she didn't catch the end of that sentence, her ears were no longer working. What caught her attention though was a pair of hands that gently grabbed her face starting the creation of a clear memory burned into her mind forever. The girl's eyes ringed with worry looking down from above. They were a beautiful bright shiny blue with an otherworldly pattern to them. A face while marred by injury still remained expressive and had a quality to it that made her temporarily forget the pain throbbing all over. Mouth moving but message unheard. Soft lips undecipherable in her mental haze.

The next thing she was aware of was an oxygen line shoved down her windpipe and that the face was gone leaving a sharp pin prick of hollow loss in her chest. View replaced by the orderlies and doctors of the small hospital she had been taken to against her will that became a general blur as she was wheeled on a gurney into an emergency surgery. Her last memory of that night was the bright lights aimed down from the ceiling and the cold numbing feeling that bloomed from her lungs when the air supply changed.

When she woke up surrounded by wires and tubes she spotted her coat somehow in one piece waiting for her on a chair. Enough yen for a train ticket stuffed into a pocket pinned to a note apologizing for not staying, apologizing for pulling the item off her to save it from getting cut apart by the nurses, and a generic get well soon.

In the following days she learned the room and operation had been paid in full, in cash, by her anonymous savior simply going by the name Kanto Drifter from the nurses that came to answer a call button.

In the following months after she returned to her post every attempt to figure out who her mysterious life saver was ended fruitlessly. The existence untraceable by even her talented information specialist became relegated to just a memory of a selfless nameless ghost. Those beautiful eyes, and the gentlest touch she could remember, that appeared in lucid dreams after midnight to embrace her and carry her off to a temporary tranquil escape in deep sleep from the never ending stream of aches and pains she needed to endure for the good of all. Those nights in phantom caring arms were the only ones she truly got any rest.

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A little over two years later Student Council President Satsuki Kiryuin was walking down the white stone steps of her castle in Tokyo bay flanked on either side by an honor guard of students when a commotion broke her thoughts. Casually looking down her nose at the disturbance likely mere moments away from being crushed into the dirt by the disciplinary committee her eyes widened at an utterance in a familiar voice aimed at her that died on the familiar lips that spoke them.

“Hey you! You the queen around-... Here?”

In an instant her stone mask faltered and morphed into a look of genuine surprise. Focus squarely on the pair of eyes that looked up at her equally shocked. A pair of very unique eyes that could only belong to her nameless guardian angel. With a wave of her hand the two dozen students preparing to take the girl down stopped before they could tackle her. Walking down to get closer a red sword's tip pointed at her lowered to the ground. Standing facing each other within reach they were both at a loss for words while memories of a cold night came back anew.

Satsuki had redoubled her training since that hospital stay. Had

emergency defense systems and tunnels built and installed into her fortress school in case the unforeseen were to occur. In case she were to falter and find herself in need of retreating to live and fight another day. She wasn't one to throw away hard earned wisdom regardless of the source.

She was aware enough to order Gamagori to cease and desist when his regalia burst forth to readiness in a flash of light neither of them payed any particular attention to. His protests shot down by a single commanding shout. Squaring her feet she lightly bowed to the girl before stepping aside to motion her toward the school with a wave of her arm.

“I owe you an incalculably high personal debt. If there is anything I can help you with I would be delighted to discuss it over tea. Would you please join me?”

Cautiously accepting the invitation the very real girl she would learn to be Ryuko Matoi put her half scissor away as they walked back toward the school's doors side by side holding light conversation reminiscing on events following the fateful night. Leaving almost everyone Satsuki had gathered into her army at a complete loss as to what the hell was going on and how some delinquent transfer nobody was on a first name basis with the Queen of Honnouji.

In the following days they became something more than fast friends and confidants. Kindred souls reunited.

In the following months they would fight a war in Kamui as something more than comrades in arms.

Until finally on one bright January morning, when the sun rose where just hours earlier the whole world believed it never would again, they woke up in each others arms as something more than sisters.

Bare skin protected from the morning chill rolling off the bay by a long white coat dutifully cared for ever since it had been saved by her guardian angel.

Chapter End Notes

Loosely spawned from Journey's "Don't stop believing", spun out of control in the span of hours from there.

Have far too many little stories languishing in the digital vault. Might as well start somewhere. If things are wrong feel free to let me know.

General update to things people might actually care about: Long form is kicking my ass. Night chapters eventually when I stop rewriting them relentlessly and continue the plot. End to Red and blue when it hopefully doesn't suck.

It's a living

Chapter Summary

This ain't no place for no hero.
This ain't no place for no better man.
This ain't no place for no hero,
To call home.

-The Heavy: Short change hero

Chapter Notes

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

She had known what she liked for years. She had also never made any effort to hide that fact regardless of the trouble it brought her. It was just another avenue of verbal attack idiots would try before she beat them to a pulp. Administration in charge of boarding school dorms shoved her into her own room when they didn't want to deal with figuring out who they could possibly stick her with because of it. She got exempt from gym classes because they didn't have anywhere for her to change in a timely fashion without getting an earful from parents. Multiple hostels banned her for life when she was on the road after they got complaints of leering and molesting.

She would never do that kind of *crap*, but *lying assholes will be lying assholes.*

She wanted someone who would actually *care* about her. A nice person that was fit enough to keep up, but still soft enough to shove your face into on a cold day to feel warm together. Enough butt to get a firm grip and slap a bit to get them going on a rough tumble every now and again. Enough sense to not be a brainless idiot.

Unfortunately for her she was already in a limited *dating pool* as it was, having a laundry list of desired traits only left her

further alone in life. And as if making a mockery of her nature decided to railroad her with numerous genetic *gifts*.

She didn't care for classes, but she still coasted by on zero effort well enough to not be bothered by teachers. Living with only her own two fists to back her up she had feminine muscle that *cardio bunnies* would kill for, but were too pussy to pay the price that was her rough life. Uniform restrictions eventually forced her out of pants and into heavy pleated skirts to cover her own firm shapely rear. Ever defiant of anyone that would dare dictate her life, and faced with a practical need of freeing her legs from the hindrance to combat ability, she hacked the first one up with safety scissors into a miniskirt. The transition was rough, but through rain, wind, snow, and shine she only ever wore them hemmed comfortably thigh high ever since. At the opposite end of the spectrum, and her growing torso, though the notion of comfortable clothing crumbled completely over the same years due to available income. A swelling cup size came with a swelling cup price to match, as both rocketed up the double digits. No matter how unfair it seemed to her, proper sized support left her budget far behind.

Looking in a mirror she had everything possible to get attention from others. Which on certain days she *would* get in spades thanks to those *gifts*, it was just not from anyone she ever wanted it from.

Sitting on a bench she could only stare out into the distance at an island in the bay, with something between regret and annoyance at herself stirring in her gut. She had a legitimately acquired proper set of transfer papers in her case to the school there, but there was no public ferry access, no commuter train route, and the only road out to the place was one privately owned concrete bridge.

She needed to get over there before the term officially started on Monday or *for some bizarre reason* she'd be deregistered *permanently,* and if that happened she could kiss her best lead so far *goodbye*. It was currently Friday afternoon though, and she didn't have a cent left to her name to pay the toll.

Two days to get money, realistically needed more than that sooner to keep food on her plate, and there wasn't a chance in hell of getting past the overkill security checkpoint at the start of the bridge any other way. She would have to work, it was going to suck, and it was entirely her own fault.

Head falling backward she groaned. She had to stop giving compassionate handouts to others before it became the death of her. Most of her funds for years had gone to a bad habit of

spending it on any pretty face that needed the help. She just couldn't help herself. When you live on pocket change though you don't *get* to be the hero that sweeps damsels in distress off their feet in the end, no matter how hard you try to make that budget stretch.

Especially when they are beautiful and you spend way *way* more on them then you really ever should have, and then didn't even get her name before just up and leaving.

That one still stung. She should have just ditched school for a few days to stick around, but *no* she left *like an idiot* and all she had to show for it was occasionally waking up with an aching frustrated *need* in her heart and loins. And she knows when they were about *her,* even when the details are lost in the fog of dreams, because it's the only time she wakes up *drooling.*

Sighing she got up to go in search of diner, and to clear her head from images stirred up in recollection. It had been years now, the chick probably wouldn't even recognizer her after so long given the circumstances even if they ever met again. And that's not counting the possibility of head trauma wiping her away from the girl's mind before memories could have even been made. The sooner she finally forgot about miss *tall, fair, and charming* the better.

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Before sunrise the bow usually on her neck was removed and shoved deep into a jacket pocket while she trudged off to a public restroom. She had to change out of anything too *school girl* looking for the day. Said day had already started well with a shower at a gym thanks to a security shift change. The front desk hadn't payed her much attention when she left without paying, they thought she had shown her *actually nonexistent* membership when coming in to the shift prior. The same shift prior who let her through initially as one could just pay for a day's use when they left. Which she didn't do. It was risky but a useful con to know.

Entering a small building in the park devoid of other people she took a stall and put her guitar case on the toilet. Cracking it open she slipped off her jacket to shove it inside. Skulls didn't lend themselves to anything other than day work in niche jobs typically more trouble than they were worth. Her button down shirt was next to get stashed before skirt was taken off and left aside for now. It was the only one she had, so it would have to do. Standing there she was forced to finally decide how far she was going today, but eventually freed her equal parts loved, *and*

loathed, sizable perky breasts from their fabric prison.

Day to day was annoying, but it was not logistically feasible to do much other than strap herself down in bargain bag bras that were always too small to be comfortable.

Digging around under a foam board separating the scissor blade from her stuff she pulled out a secure plastic bag. Striped panties pulled down and off her legs the combined underclothes got shoved into the receptacle for her limited laundry before pulling out a similar bag holding her most valuable possessions. Including one particular change of underwear.

It had taken a full year of scrimping and saving at every turn, but when she graduated middle-school and entered high-school she managed to build enough of a savings pile that she could afford to splurge on some *by then necessary* things for herself. The plan had originally been to get multiple sets of the simplest, *and cheapest,* things that could actually serve her physical needs and then leave. When she finally managed to settle her nerves and entered the lingerie lined walls of the specialty *woman's boutique* though, *a place she really had no business being in whatsoever on her regular budget in the first place,* she found herself roaming far off course. Discount displays forgotten before even catching sight of them the mannequins like sirens drew her into the sea of colorful *dream fuel* to browse. It was among those shelves she found a generic *half off sale tag* hiding under a basket. An item she knew from experience legally *had* to be honored if it was on an item out for sale.

So with an admittedly *unreasonable* snap decision she left the racks behind, went to the other end of the store, and put a scheme in motion. It was a hugely nonsensical waste of her resources, but she made off like a bandit with the best steal of her life. One matching set of luxurious black items that fit her like a glove.

Holding up a lacy black floral thong she slid it up her legs and comfortably nestled it into place before pulling out a flat cardboard box to rip open. Socks and sneakers removed she pulled on the sheer black pantyhose carefully. Like nylon gold the fragile limited use leg-wear was one of the easiest, *and most expensive*, ways to look less homeless than she actually was.

The money was critically needed, so she was pulling out all the stops.

Sneakers stashed in a cloth bag and stuffed at the bottom end of the case she swapped out for a pair of black pumps to step into. They had been saved from a dumpster during a coordinated operation that involved a distraction, five other people looking for loot to sell, and the employees to forget proper *destruction protocol* before dumping stock thanks to said distraction. She would have turned them around on the market herself, but they turned out to

be close enough to her size back then to warrant holding onto. Now they were a perfect fit. Some titanium screws swiped off a construction site pinned into the heels under nice beige insoles made them durable enough to justify the valuable luggage space they took up. And the weeks of ankle torture it took to teach herself how to walk in them.

Next item up was the *piece-de-resistance*. One black lace floral bra. Wonderfully supportive, able to fold up thanks to being non-wired, custom fitted, and *provocative as hell* she kept a small log book of every time she wore the T-back, how long it was worn per outing, what the weather was like that day, and when she cleaned it. This glorious thing was almost worth more in personal value than the jacket she embroidered herself. It was a slice of heaven on earth, and she was determined to get every last mile out of it like a car owner would their motorized pride and joy. She was going to go on her first date in it, she was going to have sex with her first serious girlfriend thanks in part to it, and if luck holds *get married* in it.

“Girl's gotta have something nice...”

Black shirt pulled out for the occasion she looked at it in her grasp and frowned. It was old and tighter than she would like, but it was clean and dark colors wouldn't be visible beneath. Putting on the V-neck it snugly hugged every curve and contour of her upper body, while leaving an embarrassingly noticeable amount of cleavage open to the world. Stepping into her skirt with a pair of heel clicks the item was returned to its home on her hips where she threaded a black studded belt through its loops. Next an aesthetically matching cheap necklace was donned in an effort to pull at least *some* attention up toward her face.

Using a small hand mirror made from scrap glass and salvaged silver paint she took out one of her two tubes of lipstick and applied the finishing touch. She personally found the bright candy red oil substance *a bit much*, but it matched the streak in her hair. And it was *by far* easier to explain *that* away as a fashion choice, not a freak birthmark. The very last item on the list was a lone hairpin left out of sight on black strands in case she needed to look professional and pin the red ones where they couldn't be seen.

Cleaned up, dolled up, and putting what was the best face she could put together forward she repacked everything else into her case and left the stall. Washing her hands of stray red from the messy old tube she studied herself in the full bank mirror over the sinks.

She looked like a regular young woman getting ready to hit the town for a weekend. Someone who swiped plastic cards without a care when it came time to pay at checkout. Someone that carried lots of bags while out on regular shopping sprees. Someone who

laughed with their friends about other friends' antics over the last week. Someone going out on a date.

Bitterly swallowing those thoughts she strode out of the restroom and set out through the earliest of early morning light toward the fish markets with her case. Every day every seafood offering eatery sent people down to get fresh supply before *hauling ass* back to their kitchens in preparation for the day's meals. Going there of all places was unorthodox, but it got *results*.

Like every time she resolved herself to work in Tokyo she sought out a particular old woman who sold her family's daily catch to politely chat the old broad up. She would initially turn down but eventually, *reluctantly of course,* accept some spare cuts of raw tuna to eat that made up her breakfast. Normally they were all for the buyers to have to see how good the product was, *but she just had to have some it was better than ever see!* Or so she was always told. It was some kind of family tradition, very strange, and she knew better than to say anything about it. From there she would make herself generally friendly and useful until, *with the old lady's help,* she would get into one of the vans and ride to a restaurant to waitress there for the day.

Base pay was minimal at best, everything was under the table, and if anyone with a clipboard showed up she was to leave with whatever amount she could be handed in her escape out back doors *or else*. Luckily she hit pay-dirt and the place was moderately busy, an old respected family operated joint typically free of *rowdy types*, and just far enough out of the way that inspectors hated making the trip when not necessary.

The perfect place to ply for much more than a *sub par wage*.

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Working nonstop from opening to closing through two full shifts with no break she was exhausted, her feet ached, and smiling hurt her face to the point she wanted to gouge her eyes out with chopsticks. But with a decent enough wad of cash in hand she was chased out into the night to fend for herself. Money tucked into her bra safely, opposite a separate stack made of *extra tips,* she splurged on a ramen bowl to get the taste of earning them out of her mouth. She was hungry and not about to wait for rice to boil on a campfire. Especially after forcing herself, per the usual, to extort money out of lonely old businessmen in the diner rush with some less than professional *disgusting flirting* for their drunk minds. A lot of bending over a

little more than necessary, but not enough to actually *show anything,* while wiping down tables for good measure. She loathed everything to do with this, but she needed the money and no one could actually *touch* her, so she spit in nature's face and uses her *gifts* to her own advantage.

Satisfyingly full the next order of business was hitting up a self service place to sort out her laundry bag, and give her daily-wear a good wash while she wasn't in it for once. Skirt sent for a tumble she sat on a bench facing the machines with a towel wrapped around her waist instead, and pulled out her money to count it up with a wry smile during the wait.

Stomach churning or not the days she went to work for tips were always profitable enough to fund her *charity work.*

She sensed the movement behind her before she could hear it and ducked her head accordingly. The attack aimed at the back of her skull went wide and only glanced her shoulder while a second pair of hands rushed in to snatch away most of the paper in her grasp.

“Oi, what the fuck!?”

“Shut it!”

The snatcher immediately ran for the doors after taking *the goods* while his partner wearing a bandanna over his face kept up his attack, and generally worked to stop her from giving chase. Ducking under a horizontal swing she used her feet to kick her guitar case up to her grasp and hurled the whole thing at the runner. Striking true on the back of his head he went down in a daze face first into a bench bolted to the floor, knocking him out cold. Her earnings fell from limp hands and scattered all over the floor around in a mess, but it wouldn't be going any further out of reach. *One down, one to go.*

Unfortunately to make the throw left her open to a hit, the improvised weapon of a metal thermos filled with water solidly impacted her left flank making her stumble with a grunt. Enraged over spotting his prone co-conspirator when she made her own solidly connecting retaliation kick into his flank, his free hand went straight for the towel and tore it away.

A huge chunk of pantyhose went with it spreading a tear into a catastrophic failure of the thing leaving half her butt and most of her left leg exposed. On instinct she tried to cover herself with a hand and yelled indignantly.

“What the fuck, you asshole!”

“*HAHA* what the hell do we have here? Which club do you strip at

bitch, I'd wait around there for the opportunity to jump you *again!*"

The threat filled insult laid his intentions down *real clear* as he openly leered at her hip. Making matters worse somewhere in the back the place's one employee had finally woken up, and was currently calling the cops while cowering behind the dry cleaning reception counter. A trip to a precinct and questions about her livelihood were the *last* thing she needed this week. She had to get her stuff and bail before they turned up looking for bribes *or worse*, but first she needed her weapon. Gritting teeth she focused and the day's exhaustion was blown away with pure adrenaline.

Diving for her case he gave chase and shoulder checked her into the wall of washing machines before she could reach it. With an arm around her waist he grabbed a fistful of shirt to hold her like a vice, and took no time in getting his other hand into the back of her waistband. She kicked and thrashed at the heavy man, but the angles were bad, and he tore at anything he could grab until *everything* was ruined in a cacophony of horrible ripping noises.

Occupied destroying her underwear he didn't see the elbow coming that violently slammed him dead on the nose, breaking it.

"*N-No, NO!* You bastard, now you're dead you hear me!?"

"*Gah,* damn it! Newsflash you little stacked stripper your ass is-"

Getting a shoe in hand she used the reinforced heel to knock the side of his head. The solid impact audibly resounded through the air and caused just enough disorientation to let her break free of the hold. Slipping out to his side she lined up her next hit in a rage.

"*Newsflash* prick, YOUR ASS IS *DEAD!*"

Smashing clean home on his temple he tried grabbing at his head to block the unexpectedly heavy blows that rained down. But she just kept swinging at any shaved scalp left exposed until he stopped yelping and slumped face first into a puddle of his own blood on the floor. Even if he wasn't outright dead with a fractured skull, he still *assuredly* wasn't getting up anytime soon. *Two for two.*

Standing over the body trying to catch her breath the buzzer of two dryers went off. Laundry done she pulled out her clothes and quickly dressed herself over the remnants of precious things she didn't want to think about right now.

Clothing claimed she slipped the pump back on her foot and got down to shove her things into the case. Laundry, lace and silk scraps torn away, and most importantly *her money* securely stowed she set out while sirens blared in the distance.

Legs mechanically moving she took side streets to disappear, and aimed to get back to her latest secure sleeping spot to spend the night without further incident. Along the way she numbly figured out a rough budget, *stringent on a careful recount,* to cover the toll. The rest would just have to do covering her living expenses.

She made two stops on her way back. The first in the park to forcefully hurl a small book into the pond. She didn't need it anymore. The second, *unplanned*, came from music drawing her to a sidewalk corner. She stood and listened to a street musician play a tune along with a small crowd that mostly stiffed and walked away when the song was done. She dropped a coin in the woman's hat, among few others, and left without a word when she was thanked.

Such was life for a drifter.

Chapter End Notes

Surprise. Chapter two of a one shot, I know. Inspiration works in strange ways and it kinda sorta fit in with the previous chapter, so fuck it. One strange sequel/prequel to chapter one. One day in the life of the *hero*. Satsuki wasn't the only one unable to escape thoughts of the other, apologies that she doesn't have much of a role in this one.

Once again loosely inspired by music noted in the summary.

Still no hard promises for more in this little AU, when experimental ideas happen it happens.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!